

TESTIMONY OF ERNEST PAGAN
NORTH ATLANTIC STATES REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CARPENTERS
BEFORE THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
REGARDING LCO 737, AAC THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CONNECTICUT'S
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE
January 31, 2020

Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, Senator Martin, Representative Devlin and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Ernie Pagan. I am a lifelong resident of New Haven and a member of the North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters which represents more than 30,000 union carpenters in the six states of New England and most of New York State.

I strongly support An Act Concerning THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CONNECTICUT'S TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE as an important step to address the long-term, infrastructure financing needs of our state.

In New Haven, we have witnessed an economic boom thanks to the growth of Yale University and an apartment boom. But I am extremely worried that if we don't start to fix our transportation mess in this state, New Haven's economic growth come to a stop.

All of us are familiar with the extent of Connecticut's infrastructure problem. Connecticut's roads and bridges are aging and in desperate need of repair. According to the Federal Highway Administration, 57% of Connecticut's roads are "unacceptable"—the 2nd highest percentage of all 50 states—and 33.5% of Connecticut's bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. According to a 2017 report by the national transportation research group, TRIP, Connecticut's deficient roads cost Connecticut motorists a total of \$6.1 billion annually in the form of additional vehicle operating costs, congestion related delays and traffic crashes. Residents spend over 45 hours per year stuck in traffic. Some of us spend much more.

Analysis has shown that the state should spend approximately \$2 billion dollars per year, over the next 30 years, just to maintain current levels of service.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that the federal government will increase their financial support to address the nationwide transportation infrastructure crisis any time soon. In fact, percentage-wise the federal contribution to infrastructure projects has declined significantly. That is why Connecticut must stand up and address it's long-term infrastructure problem now.

In November of 2018, Connecticut voters took another important step by overwhelmingly—more than 80%--voting in favor of the Transportation Lock-box Constitutional Amendment.

We believe that an electronic tolling system for large tractor-trailer trucks is an important step to address the long-term infrastructure problem facing Connecticut. It will do this primarily by leveraging Federal Build America Bonds that will be available because of the tolls.

This electronic tolling system will require out-of-state, tractor-trailer truckers to contribute to fix our roads and bridges for the first time instead of getting a free ride on the backs of Connecticut taxpayers, like they do today. Unfortunately, Connecticut drivers don't ride for free when we drive through our neighboring states or most of the states up and down the eastern seaboard.

It is critical for Connecticut's construction industry—including the approximately 4,000 members of the Connecticut Carpenter's Union Local 326 and our contractors—that the Connecticut legislature and the Governor find a long-term solution to financing the Special Transportation Fund (STF).

The so-called Great Recession was devastating for Connecticut's construction industry. Connecticut went from 68,900 construction workers in March of 2008 to 49,000 in March of 2010. Over the last few years, total Connecticut construction employment inched back up to 61,400 in December of 2018. The most recent number for Connecticut construction employment was 58,000 as of December 2019, a 5 percent decline over the past year.

Fixing Connecticut's infrastructure is vital to the economic well being of Connecticut's construction industry and our overall economy. Business leaders in Connecticut, for instance, cite the transportation problem as the number one obstacle for companies to relocate to Connecticut. I know that the Governor has expressed support for a long-term transportation goal of 30-30-30. You won't be able to reach that worthy goal unless you support a long-term financing solution, such as electronic tolling of tractor-trailer trucks.

We hope that members of the 2020 Connecticut legislature have the courage to address the long-term infrastructure problem the way the 2018 legislators did when they supported a short-term fix. Connecticut voters expressed their support for a long-term remedy for our infrastructure woes in November of 2018 by overwhelmingly voting in favor of a constitutional amendment for the Transportation Lock Box.

Let's not wait until there is another Mianus River Bridge collapse to act. It's time to rebuild Connecticut's infrastructure with Connecticut construction workers funded in large part by out-of-state tractor trailer companies.

Let's get Connecticut construction workers back to work! TRANSPORTATION EQUALS JOBS! It's our turn.

Thank you for your consideration.